
PFLAG Edmonton

March 1997

MEETINGS:

Support Meeting

Tuesday, March 18, 1997

7:30 pm

Suite 103, 10612 - 124 St

We welcome parents, families, friends and those supportive of: lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgendered people. And, of course, les/bi/gay/trans people themselves are most welcome.

Coffee and snacks will be served.

For more information or to talk to a PFLAG parent please call:

voice box 3524
from 7:00 to 9:30 pm
weekdays.

Weekends please call
Lynne or
Ellen.

Mail may be forwarded to:



Public Educators:

Making The

Difference

Business Meeting

Tuesday, April 1, 1997

7:00 pm

Suite 103, 10612 - 124 St.

Voting privileges are restricted to paid up members of good standing with PFLAG. Visitors and guests have no vote, but are encouraged to participate or observe as they choose.

Decaffeinated coffee and snacks will be served.

PFLAG

We are parents, families, friends, and supporters of our lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgendered children.

Our primary objectives are

- to offer mutual support wherever needed;
- to invite others to share knowledge, **to be free from fear**, and to reach out, search and discover more about these children.

PFLAG EDUCATION AT ALBERTA TEACHERS' CONVENTIONS

North Central Alberta Teachers' Convention

Eleven PFLAG Edmonton members took turns hosting a display table at this convention. Many times we heard from passing educators comments like, "It's really good you're here!" as they hurried on their way lest a fellow educator

Please share this newsletter

"tease" (harass) them about it later.

Over 50 educators did have the courage to enter our little U-shaped booth, perusing the wide assortment of literature and books. One even spent 20 minutes discussing a concern about one of her students. We need many, many more teachers like her to help our kids!

Most of those who entered left both with literature and a strong feeling of support for their efforts to assist les/bi/gay/trans students to better endure the violent homophobia they experience at their schools.

Central East Alberta Teachers' Converntion

Two consecutive sessions were presented by PFLAG Edmonton at this convention: the first on the issues of transgender students, the second focused on issues of homosexual and bisexual students as well as issues of students with gay moms or dads. A total of 10 speakers presented including Dr Warneke, chief psychiatrist at the Grey Nuns Hospital, 2 transgendered high school students, 1 mother of a transgendered student, Dr. Hastings, former Associate Director of Curriculum, Director of Early Childhood Services and Director of Planning Services Branch, Alberta Education (not all three concurrently!), 3 gay/bisexual students, and 1 gay mom.

Question from the audience of teachers and other educators

mainly centered around the need for very specific suggestions as to "How can I make my classroom/school gay positive? Where do I start? How can I work with those who are supportive without being strongly ridiculed by those who are homophobic?"

We apologize to those whom we had to turn away at the door. Next year we will request more space.

COUNSELLING OPPORTUNITY FOR PFLAG PARENTS!

(Courtesy Womonspace News, Feb, 1997)by Tina Taylor:

Peer Counselling

I recently took the GLCC Peer Counselling course...There were eleven men and women of varying ages and backgrounds. It was a great experience!

One of the best things was how much I learned about myself. As we practiced with each other, we had to figure out what our own issues were and discuss them. It was remarkable how this discussion allowed me to explore my own mind.

At our last class, we all shared our feelings about the course. Many of us commented how nice it was to get to know people of the opposite sex. Before this, I had virtually no men friends; now I have several. In this day of community divisiveness, it was great to have a bond with men for a change.

The course was three hours, once a week, for 8 weeks. Now that the skills part is completed,

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we will have four in-services on specific, hard-to-deal-with issues. We're not going to end up as professional therapists, but our new knowledge and skills are certainly going to assist us in helping people who need to talk. I'm very much looking forward to my first shift at the GLCC office, and I encourage everyone to take the course when it's offered again. Kudos to our instructors!

Next course will start March 11, 1997. Please contact the Gay & Lesbian Community Centre at: 488-3234.

PFLAG SPEAKERS BUREAU

Feb 4 - About 100 University of Alberta Family Studies students listened as Terry, his daughter Zena and a gay university student named David spoke about their struggles re having a gay son, a gay brother and being gay. It was obvious that our homophobic society causes much harm to families through its lack of knowledge and thoughtless prejudices.

Feb 12 - A mother and son PFLAG team and a gay mother, Lynne, spoke to about 35 Grant MacEwan nursing students on a similar theme, with the added dimension of what struggles a child with a *different* parent faces in a homophobic society.

Tracy, Planned Parenthood facilitator at both of these presentations, wishes to express her admiration and thanks for the wonderful sincerity shared by each of these speakers with

their audience. Speech by speech, ignorance gives way to understanding and compassion. Congratulations speakers!

Calgary Board of Education Announces Les/Bi/Gay Safety Plan

The following action plan was approved in principle September 24, 1996:

- a. THAT an Advisory Committee be established to assist the Advisor On Gender Issues with further planning and the implementation of the Action Plan as presented. The Advisory Group is to include representation from schools, departments, Calgary Health Services, Calgary Police Services (SRO Unit) and parents.
- b. THAT guidelines be established by the Advisory Committee for the implementation of the Action Plan.
- c. THAT the following Action Plan be approved in principle, pending the development of the aforementioned guidelines:
 - 1) The Professional Resource Centre to put together a Staff Resource Package that will include several articles on the safety needs of gay/lesbian youth. The Professional Resource Centre will also continue to make this matter part of its collection development.
 - 2) The Video Loan Pool to look into purchasing video material on this matter.
 - 3) The Evaluation/Selection Group of Research and System

Development to evaluate materials, non-fiction and fiction, for suitability in school libraries.

4) Workshops on gay/lesbian/bisexual youth be held for Principals, Assistant Principals, Counsellors, CALM Teachers and other teaching staff.

5) Harassment workshops will include information about the safety and well-being of gay/lesbian students and staff.

6) The Advisor on Gender Issues will attend meetings of the Calgary Police Service's Gay and Lesbian Community Police Liaison Committee. The Calgary Police Service will be providing workshops on homophobia and homosexuality for all School Resource Officers in the next Year.

7) The Advisor on Gender Issues will conduct a workshop on gay/lesbian youth at Teachers' Convention in February 1996.

8) Gender Attitude and Achievement Promotion (GAAP) will have a session on gay/lesbian youth issues in December 1996 for junior high teachers who are interested in gender issues.

Guidelines for the above action plan included the statement that *Violence and harassment toward students or staff for any reasons, including sexual orientation, will not be tolerated...For example, this would include teachers and students not being able to denigrate or apply negative labels to those who believe that*

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homosexual activity is an appropriate expression of human sexuality, and teachers and students not being allowed to denigrate or apply negative labels to those who believe that homosexuality is inappropriate.

How Our Children Became Gay/Lesbian (A Story)

by Bryan Theiss

(This story appeared in the May '93 Mountlake Terrace (Washington) High School school newspaper)

"I can still remember it like it was yesterday: the day I made one of the most important decisions of my life," he began. He met the Sexuality Fairy, who visits "everyone when they must decide who and what they will be sexually attracted to later in life." The fairy gave Bryan three choices -- "hetero, homo or bi" - and then elaborated:

- If he chose to be homosexual, Bryan said the fairy told him, he would be treated as an outcast, blamed for the spread of the HIV virus, never allowed to marry the one he loved, barred from jobs in certain fields, castigated for asking for "special privileges," urged to change, assaulted, perhaps even killed.
- If he decided to be bisexual, the fairy continued, Bryan would be treated with much the same misunderstanding.
- If, however, he chose to be heterosexual, he would be

"considered by most to be normal...(and would) better appreciate a lot of the jokes on *In Living Color*."

Well! "The pressure was on. So many choices - and they all sounded so good! The same sex down one road, along with a large segment of society hating me because of my attraction. Both sexes down another road, with the same hatred. And the opposite sex down the third road, with no drawbacks. How could I possibly decide?" Bryan wrote.

"Oh, I don't know," he told the fairy. "How about...um...hetero? Yeah. I'll be hetero, I guess."

"Hetero it is!" the fairy replied. And with the wave of a magic wand Bryan ran off to the other side of the playground, "to throw dirt bombs at girls in hopes they would notice me."

"It was hard to believe that such a tough decisions could be made in so little time," he admitted. "But I made the decision, so I felt the attraction."

"It wasn't until later in life that I met the physical Attributes Fairy who made me decide whether the girls I was attracted to should be blonde, brunette, or bald with no teeth," he concluded. "But that's another fairy tale."

PFLAG SUPPORT NEEDED:

The following is adapted from an article by Deborah Locke in the St. Paul Pioneer Press of January 2, 1997. It comes to us

courtesy of GALE (Gay & Lesbian Educators) *Force*, B.C., February, 1997.

YOUTHS' INTOLERANCE OF "DIFFERENT" CAN DESTROY LIVES

Sometimes in this newspaper business you run smack into a story that takes you deeply into tragedy. The details of a few years back unfold in slow, regretful motion each time a related story surfaces.

The boy, 14, went into the family den, shot a bullet through his heart and died an hour later. For months, he had endured vicious harassment from classmates...

Like those memories from a Sunday afternoon in 1992 when I watched two suburban Milwaukee people cry about their dead son and heard about the most senseless cruelty imaginable. The boy, 14, went into the family den, shot a bullet through his heart and died an hour later. For months he had endured vicious harassment from classmates, such as lewd phone calls late at night, and I mean filthy lewd. He was the object of **name-calling, shunning and ridicule**. A telephone tracer installed by the police department logged 25 obscene calls to the boy in the ten days leading to his death.

That death and the anarchy of savagery that led to it reminded me of William Goldring's *Lord of the Flies*, except this was no 1954 work of fiction.

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The boy's death was the product of intolerance and loathing. A classmate spread a rumor that the boy was gay; he was not. A police investigation later concluded that the children knew the rumor was false. On an answering machine, the boy's classmates left their last obscene message, heard by the boy's parents after his funeral. Police traced the call; seven boys were implicated. Some were fined \$25 in juvenile court and some were placed on probation. I called the boys' parents for comment and all but one slammed the telephone receiver down. I called the family priest for a sense of the home environment and found that the boy was loved and well cared for. His parents weren't aware of the nature of the calls for several months.

At the time of the suicide, the school district did not have a student harassment policy.

Kids - and adults - use sexual issues as weaponry. In the form of harassment, those weapons can lead to suicide. Most telling of all, I've met with middle school and high school children since, had them read the news story and asked if cruelty could kill. Every one of them said, "Yes."

At the time of the suicide, the school district did not have a student harassment policy. If a child was humiliated or verbally abused by a classmate, the child could leave the classroom. The perpetrator received no punishment.

PFLAG BUSINESS MEETING

PROPOSED AGENDA

Date: March 4, 1997
Time: 7:00 pm
Place: Gay & Lesbian Community Centre

1. Call to Order

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

- Reading and approval of minutes from February 4, 1997 Business Meeting

3. Old Business

- Financial Report
- Volunteer Forms
- Books
- Convention Reports - North Central T.C.A..
- Speakers Bureau - Feb 4 (U of A); Feb 12 (Grant MacEwan)

Karen
All
Kate
Participants

March 11 (U of A BGLAD) Gisela, Terry/Jenny, Kate

- Red Deer Campout, Aug 16 or 17, PFLAG to cook Sunday bkfst?
- Helpline and message recorder
- Bylaws
- Calgary Public School Board - Guidelines & Action Plan to protect

Ellen
Lynne
Ellen

gay youth & staff in Calgary Public schools; passed Feb 25/97 !!!

What about Edmonton Public schools?

- Human Rights Commission Project
- EVM - Mozart's Requiem - Advertising
- PFLAG Federation - \$208 US
- Posters: Gay & Lesbian Positive Space

Ellen
Ellen
Ellen
Ellen

4. New Business

- Networking with Edmonton Police Services Constable Brad MacDonald
- Gloria Filax - Doing a PhD on *Given the promise of Alberta Education "excellence for all students", how does Alta Ed ensure or underwrite that promise given other levels of Alta govt intolerance?* (i.e. homophobia) Gloria
- Treats for March 18 Support meeting

Offers?

The indifference of adults and the inability of the children to acknowledge their role in the boy's death were the most astonishing parts of the story. A school board member said, **"Well, the boy was a little different, you know. He liked to be the center of attention and spoke with a slight accent."**

Another board member said they simply wanted to put the whole thing behind them and get on with the district's business. How could they put the whole thing behind them when they never put it before them?

A police investigation revealed that the seven boys' parents and the boys thought the problem was with the victim, not them. The calls were just kid stuff. **St. Paul schools have intervention programs that deal with harassment. Also, the Minnesota human rights law now states that discrimination must not occur due to sexual orientation or perceived orientation.**

St. Paul's *Out for Equity* Program now provides support services for gay/lesbian kids and for heterosexual kids who are perceived as homosexual. Contrary to rumors the program opponents like to spread, *Out for Equity* neither teaches nor condones homosexuality. It offers support for gay and lesbian kids who must learn to cope with a culture that despises them for their sexual orientation. And it offers support for those perceived as homosexual. If the program had existed in that Wisconsin school district, it

would have dealt severely and early with the vicious middle school kids who harassed the boy.

This September, had he lived, that young man would have enrolled as a sophomore in college. His dad would boast of his son's accomplishments and his mother would still fret that her youngest child was on his own. Instead, all the parents have are memories. I believe the community still blames the boy for the suicide, if it remembers him at all.

In the *Lord of the Flies*, Simon stumbles while walking toward his peers. The crowd surges on him and "screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws."

Tearing happens in verbal ways, too. The result, death is the same.

LANDMARK CASE WON

(Courtesy *Perceptions*,
Jan 29, 1997)

(Eau Claire, WI) After a nearly million dollar settlement, the largest of its kind in Wisconsin history, Jamie Nabozny has a new outlook on life after enduring years of high school abuse over his sexual orientation. Nabozny dropped out of school in 1993 and moved to Minneapolis where he worked to earn a high school equivalency diploma in order to attend college. He subsequently filed a lawsuit alleging that school administrators did

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nothing to protect him from the vicious treatment he received at the hands of his classmates.

Nabozny, now 21, is to receive \$900,000 from the Ashland School District in addition to up to \$62,000 in medical expenses arising out of his injuries while in school.

The district court initially refused to hear *Nabozny vs Podlesny* but the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ordered the lower court to hear the case. The Appeals Court ruled that Nabozny had a legitimate claim that his equal protection rights had been violated. Mr. Nabozny was represented by the Lambda Legal Defense Fund.

He testified that he was kicked in the stomach so many times that he required surgery.

After a two-day trial, a jury found three school board administrators liable for damages for failing to protect Nabozny from injury and hatred. Nabozny says he tried to kill himself over the pressure put on him at school and endured several brutal attacks from students, including a mock rape by classmates, or the time he was pushed down in a bathroom and urinated on. He testified that he was kicked in the stomach so many times that he required surgery.

"I feel like I have justice and that means justice for all the other kids out there who aren't sure if they should stay in school or stay alive."

Upon hearing the verdict in his favour, Nabozny reacted this way, "I feel like I have justice and that means justice for all the other kids out there who aren't sure if they should stay in school or stay alive." Jamie Nabozny now hopes to go on to college and have the normal educational experience that he has longed for.

RHODE ISLAND REPORT

(Again! courtesy of GALE Force, Feb, 1997)

The report of the Rhode Island Task Force on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Youth is available on the web at: <http://members.tripod.com/~twood/safeschools.html>

Entitled *School Shouldn't Hurt: Lifting the Burden from Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Youth*, the 20 page report covers such topics as verbal harassment in schools, violence against students, suicide and isolation, high drop-out rates, teacher and administration hostility, training for teachers, presence and access to materials pertaining to gay and lesbian issues, and definitions.

EVENTS CALENDAR

U OF A - BGLAD

(Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Awareness Days)

- **March 11 - PFLAG** parents tell their "coming out" stories and answer questions

from the audience. There will be Moms and Dads of gay, lesbian and transgendered sons and daughters.

- **March 12 - Queer Coffee House**
- **March 13 - Blue Jean Day.** If you are les/bi/gay/trans

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positive, i.e. a supporter, don your blue jeans and let your support be known!

- **March 15 - QUAT (Queers at the Top) DANCE** with Kissing Booth. A loonie/kiss. All proceeds go to the Delwin Vriend Defense Fund. Tickets: \$5 at the door. 9:00 pm and on....

WEEKLY EVENTS

SUNDAY

ARCTIC FRONTRUNNERS:
10:00 AM. Phone: [REDACTED]

LAMBDA CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHURCH:
7:00 PM. Garneau United Church
Phone: 988-3913

MCC: 7:15 PM. McDougall United Church. Phone: 429-2321

MONDAY

OUTreach: U of A based social and political organization. For details on times, locations, and events, Phone: [REDACTED]

TUESDAY

SEMI-COMPETITIVE VOLLEYBALL: 7:00 - 9:30 PM. GMCC downtown campus. Phone: Ron [REDACTED]

GROUP MOVIE NIGHT: early show. Phone: Kent [REDACTED]

TACTICS HOUSE LEAGUE: (darts) Shakespear's Dart & Rumpus Room. Phone: [REDACTED]

WEDNESDAY

RECREATIONAL VOLLEYBALL: 6:30 - 8:30 PM. GMCC downtown. Phone: Ron [REDACTED]

GAY MEN'S WEDNESDAY COFFEE EVENINGS: 7:30 PM. Breadstick Cafe (nonsmoking area) Phone: Graham [REDACTED]

GLCCE MOVIE NIGHT: 7:30 PM. Phone: 488-3234 / 988-4018

THURSDAY

GAY RADIO ON CJSR
88.5 FM

5:30 - 6:00 PM **ADAMANT EVE:** Women's Radio Show

6:00 - 7:00 **GAYWIRE**

NOTE: QUEERIES is now broadcast at 5:00 - 5:30 PM every Wednesday.

FRIDAY

RECREATIONAL BADMINTON: 6:30 - 9:30 PM. Oliver School, 10210 - 117 Street. Phone: Frank [REDACTED]

SATURDAY

NORTHERN TITANS 10 PIN BOWLING: 5:00 PM. Pins & Cues, Westmount Shopping Mall. Phone: Kent [REDACTED]

INFORMATION PHONE LINES

Out & Out (02): 988-3132
GLCCE: 988-4018
GMCC: 988-3671
EVM: 988-4620
PTYE: 906-6221
OUTreach: [REDACTED]
Gaylines: [REDACTED]
PFLAG: [REDACTED]

It's a Transgendered Life!

March 1997

"NOT FROM SOME DARK CORNER"

The May 9 (96) article "Transvestites strutting stuff for conference" is yet another example of careless and damaging journalism. It will do nothing more than further the public's misconceptions concerning a rather significant sector of our society that is already the focus of considerable prejudice and ridicule.

It may interest your readers to know that the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose is not a group solely organized by or having exclusive membership of transvestites. This organization serves a much broader purpose in representing issues that affect all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals in northern Alberta. The funds raised through "drag shows" and other events are directed to legitimate charities that serve both the gay and straight communities.

Transvestites, crossdressers or drag queens, as we are often interchangeably referred to, do not universally receive

sexual arousal from wearing clothing of the opposite gender. In fact, arousal

It is important for your readers to understand that I come not from some dark corner of our society, nor do any of my transgendered friends. In fact I hold a senior position with a major corporation, I am married...

brought on by this type of behavior is called a fetish and fetishes are by no means limited to this act or this group.

Further, it is important to understand that transvestitism is a gender issue quite separate from sexual orientation or fetish desires. In clinical terms it is referred to as gender dysphoria and can be described as a condition under which an individual, male or female,

has a compelling desire to assume the role of his or her opposite gender. Sexual preference is not part of the equation and has no place in any examination of this phenomenon.

Through a period of supportive counselling from a psychologist I have come to understand that I was born more female than male. I no longer carry the guilt, shame or embarrassment that a largely ignorant society imposes upon me and today, I am finally comfortable living a good portion of my life as a female. However, the barriers that our society has erected for me remain, largely due to the misconceptions created by the media.

It is important for your readers to understand that I come not from some dark corner of our society nor do any of my transgendered friends. In fact, I hold a senior position with a major corporation, I am married, yet separated from my wife of 20 years, whom I continue to maintain a loving and intimate relationship with, and I have

two children, both aware of their father's gender reality.

Stephany Lynne
Russell, Edmonton, AB

"THAT TRANSGENDER THING"

by Brian Read

Courtesy Seattle-Tacoma
Parents Banner, Sept/Oct, 1995

I recently met Denise Ottoson. When I first saw her I felt uncomfortable, my first impression being that she was a man dressed as a woman. We volunteer together, and I noticed how some of the other volunteers reacted much the same as I had. One even mentioned to me how odd she made him feel.

There is a lot of confusion, even outrage in our community concerning transgender people. Why a man or woman would want to tamper with their physical body through surgery to reflect some inner message, disconcerts most people, even frightens them. To get to the heart of this I decided to sit down and speak with Denise concerning her perspective.

Knowing something about yourself is one thing, accepting it is quite another.

"I know at a very early age that somehow I was in the wrong body," Denise told me. Having grown up in rural South Dakota, she felt she was the only person

in the world who felt that way. "I didn't have any language for it until I was about twenty one, or so, when I read about Christine Jorgensen (The first well-publicized American to go through a sex change in the 1950's) and realized others had felt the same as I did."

Knowing something about yourself is one thing, accepting it is quite another. Over the next twenty odd years, Denise went into denial using alcohol and career to hide behind. Eight years ago she quit using alcohol. It was four years ago when she went through rebirthing, a process of recalling past experiences in a way which removes their emotional charge, that Denise realized she had nothing to feel shame for and was able to fully "discover the female in me."

Simply put, "I am a woman in a man's body," Denise told me. She recently completed the process of aligning her body to match her gender, a well structured program that follows the Benjamin Standards used for transgendered. Part of the process of changing gender is cross living, which involves no longer having any men's clothing or accessories. She went through a year of therapy designed to reassure her commitment, and a year long hormone treatment that led to her operation.

While sex change operations are still relatively rare, they are not that rare any longer. About fifty percent are now being performed on women, which is up

It's a Transgender Life!

drastically from ten years ago when it was commonly thought of as an issue that predominantly men struggled with.

She cites how all fetus begin as female, and while some do cross over to be male, there are the few exceptions where physically some people are born indeterminate...

"People have no distinction between sex and gender," Denise explained referring to why she prefers Transgender over Transsexual, "so people think what I am going through is some kind of sexual thing, when really it's a gender thing."

She cites how all fetus begin as female, and while some do cross over to be male, there are the few exceptions where physically some people are born indeterminate, with either both sexual organs or none, and are usually assigned to be a boy. Gender does not always match a person's physical being, some people are born into the body of the opposite sex.

As for the lifestyle of a transgendered person, there isn't anything much out of the norm to report other than what any "generic queer" (as Denise identifies herself) has to deal with in their life. "I certainly have not had an easy life with this," Denise told me, "but I don't feel victimized."

Transgendered is a great way to be, if you have the choice."